

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS REGARDING

O-59-04-09

By District 11 Councilman Kevin J. Kramer

Q: Is this tip-line Voice Activated or hosted by an actual person?

A: 24/7 staffing by real people who are well trained to take the information and work to make a recommendation. The use of actual case workers allows for the trained worker to ask questions to assist in accessing the call and gain as much vital information as possible. The use of a 24/7 tip-line is also important since many callers will make their calls during non-work hours.

Q: Are there enough companies to do an RFP or bid to provide this tip line?

A: Nine companies that offer governmental tip-lines are expected to be sent an RFP should this ordinance pass. There are even more companies that provide this service to businesses and non-profit groups. (Business Controls, Inc – Ethical Advocate – Ethics Point, Inc. – Global Compliance Services, Inc. – Lighthouse Services, Inc. – Management Communication Systems, Inc. National Hotline Services - The Network, Inc and Silentwhistle.

Q: How will tips be received?

A: The ordinance establishes multiple means for contacting the 3rd party tip-line including: Telephonically, Fax, e-mail, website and via written letter.

Q: Are these companies trained in multiple languages?

A: Each company that we investigated provides callers with a multitude of language choices. This is one of the major benefits of using such as 3rd party tip-line service.

Q: Can a caller call the tip-line back to get an update or give further information?

A: 3rd party tip-line providers have spoken with have indicated that their procedures direct for operators to assign each caller a simple work order and/or case number that they can use to call back the tip line and offer additional information or simply check up on the case. This procedure would be outlined in the RFP process and in the establishment of tip-line policies and procedures.

Q: If the information gained through the tip line leads to a prosecution, will the anonymous caller be compelled to testify?

A: The tip-line operator nor the government will have no way of reaching this person, nor will anyone know their name. If a person who makes the call hears of the case and wishes to come out and make themselves known they will have the opportunity – but no one calling anonymously will be able to be identified. (This is very similar to the Anonymous tip line operated by LMPD)

Q: How many people will be answering the phones? What hours is the tip-line available?

A: The number of people employed is based on the number of people the company represents. These companies calculate the number of complaints expected based on their history dealing with this topic. Just as with any company there are busier times of the day, week and year. Most anonymous tip-lines are operated 24/7 (ours requires this within the ordinance) since many complaints are filed after and/or away from work.

Q: How much will this tip-line cost?

A: We expect the initial year to cost \$25,000 with each successive year requiring an appropriation of approximately \$20,000. The higher first year charge is to help set up the line and anticipates a higher call level. This small cost is just a fraction of what groups like the ACFE (Association of Certified Fraud Accountants) suggest is saved by the average organization that uses a tip-line. In a recent report the ACFE stated that organizations without a hotline lost approximately \$135,000 to fraud while those with hotlines lost \$56,000.

Q: Are there any penalties for those who misuse or abuse the anonymous tip-line?

A: There is no way to penalize a person who abuses the line, since contact information isn't taken – but in calling more than 20 cities/governments, we have yet to find one that believed or has had this become a problem. Safeguards are in place for most 3rd party providers through trained filtering by the 3rd Party operators.

Q: Can we use 574-LMPD?

A: There are additional state restrictions that deal with police tip-lines that make using it a little more difficult. Secondly it is the recommendations of the ACFE and other groups that tip-lines that are operated by a 3rd party, in operation 24 hours a day 7 days a week and located in a separate community give workers more confidence in their anonymity. The safer employees feel the more likely they are to use the tip-line to call in and lodge a concern.

Q: What other governments use a 3rd party anonymous tip-line?

A: More than 550 government organizations use a 3rd party anonymous tip-line.

Cities who use tip-lines include: Atlanta, GA - Los Angeles, CA - San Diego, CA
Milwaukee, WI - Orlando, FL, - Tulsa, OK - Mobile, AL
Irvine, CA - San Francisco, CA - Richmond, VA
Sioux Falls, SD - Toronto, Canada

States who use tip lines: Kentucky, Texas, Alabama, Illinois, California, Maryland,